

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-54. (Canceled) [preliminary amendment dated 8/15/2000]

55. (Currently amended) A method of binding superabsorbent particles to cellulose fibers, comprising:

providing binder-containing cellulose fiber, the binder-containing cellulose fiber comprising cellulose fiber having hydrogen bonding functional sites and from about 1 to 40% by weight based on the weight of the cellulose fiber of a binder comprising a non-polymeric binder having functional groups selected from the group consisting of a carboxyl, a carboxylate, a carbonyl, a sulfonic acid, a sulfonate, a hydroxyl, a phosphoric acid, a phosphate, an amide, an amine, and combinations thereof, the binder comprising binder molecules, the binder molecules having at least one functional group capable of forming a hydrogen bond or a coordinate covalent bond with the superabsorbent particles, and at least one functional group capable of forming a hydrogen bond with the cellulose fiber;

combining superabsorbent particles having a hydrogen or a coordinate covalent bonding functional site with the binder-containing cellulose fiber; and

using the binder to bind ~~binding~~ the superabsorbent particles in particulate form to the binder-containing cellulose fiber.

56. (Canceled)

57. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 55, wherein the nonpolymeric organic binder is present on the cellulose fiber in an amount ranging from 1 to 25% by weight based on the weight of the cellulose fiber.

58. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 55, wherein the cellulose fiber comprises wood pulp fiber.

59. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 55, wherein the functional groups of the nonpolymeric binder are hydroxyl functional groups.

60. (Canceled)

61. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 59, wherein the binder is present on the cellulose fiber in an amount ranging from 1-25% by weight based on the weight of the cellulose fiber.

62. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 55, wherein the binder is a diol.

63. (Canceled)

64. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 62, wherein the binder is present on the cellulose fiber in an amount ranging from 1-25% by weight based on the weight of the cellulose fiber.

65. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 55, wherein the binder is propylene glycol.

66. (Canceled)

67. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 65, wherein the binder is present on the cellulose fiber in an amount ranging from 1-25% by weight based on the weight of the cellulose fiber.

68. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 55, wherein the binding step is carried out at a temperature less than 150°C.

69. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 55, wherein the combining step comprises adding superabsorbent particles in an amount ranging from 1-80% by weight of the total weight of the superabsorbent particles and cellulose fiber.

70. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 55, wherein the combining step comprises adding superabsorbent particles in an amount ranging from 3-40% by weight of the total weight of the superabsorbent particles and cellulose fiber.

71. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 55, wherein the binder is trimethylene glycol.

72. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 55, wherein the binder is ethylene glycol.

73. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 55, wherein the binder is dipropylene glycol.

74. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 55, wherein the binder is butylene glycol.

75. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 55, wherein the binder is 2,3-butane diol.

76. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 65, wherein the cellulose fiber comprises wood pulp fiber.

77. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 72, wherein the cellulose fiber comprises wood pulp fiber.

78. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 55, wherein the binder is a hydroxy acid.

79. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 78, wherein the hydroxy acid is lactic acid.